

Pre-Assessment

What it is: Pre-assessment provides a way for teachers to gather key information about what students know and are able to do prior to instruction, as well as what student interests and learning styles are. Pre-assessments can be paper and pencil tasks or performance-based. They provide evidence to help teachers effectively match instruction with the needs of students. This includes decisions about content, pacing, materials, grouping, and specific learning activities.

Benefits:

- Instructional decisions are based on evidence
- Students are challenged at an appropriate level based on prior knowledge and skills. As a result, students are more likely to demonstrate continuous progress and growth.
- Students can be engaged using their interests, learning styles, and prior experience

Examples:

- End-of-chapter/unit test
- Sequential Roundtable Alphabet (Buehl, D. 2001, p. 33)
- Know-Want-Learn Chart (KWL)
- Performance task such as solving math problems
- Yes/No cards (Gregory & Chapman, 2002, p. 41)
- Anticipation Guide
- Mind Map
- Five-Hardest
- Most Difficult First (Winebrenner, 2001, pp. 35-39)

Situations where the strategy is useful:

- To determine flexible groupings
- To engage underachieving students using their interests, learning styles, and prior experience

Pointers:

- Make sure you know what you expect students know and be able to do at the end of the lesson/chapter/unit. Design the pre-assessment based to measure this. In other words, create the summative assessment for the lesson/chapter/unit.
- Administer pre-assessments a week or two prior to instruction to give yourself enough time to plan using the information you get about students.
- Emphasize to students that you are using the information from pre-assessments to make instructional decisions, not to grade them.
- Let students know a day or two ahead of time about pre-tests. That way, they can study if they would like. If they can learn all the material in a short period of time, then they don't need to spend several days or weeks with the content.

References/Resources

- Buehl, D. (2001). *Classroom strategies for interactive learning*. Newark, DE: International Reading Association.
- Chapman, C. & King, R. (2003). *Differentiated instructional strategies for reading in the content areas*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Gregory, G.H. & Chapman, C. (2002). *Differentiated instructional strategies*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Gregory, G.H. & Kuzmich, L. (2004). *Data driven differentiation in the standards-based classroom*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Winebrenner, S. (2001). *Teaching gifted kids in the regular classroom: Strategies and techniques every teacher can use to meet the academic needs of the gifted and talented (revised, expanded, updated)*. Minneapolis, MN: Free Spirit Publishing.